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Northwest Indiana and Illinois Times

BY BILL DOLAN

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219.662.5328 | Sunday, August 10, 2008 |

LOWELL | The Indiana State Fire Marshal's office is investigating the cause of a fire that critically injured two men Saturday morning.

Assistant Fire Chief Charles Scott said Sunday afternoon investigators are trying to determine whether a flame from a water heater ignited gasoline spilled in a garage at the corner of West Commercial Avenue and Nichols Street, where the victims were working.

Scott said the fire is considered an accident.

He could only identify the victims as men in their 30s or 40s who were airlifted to burn units in Illinois and downstate Indiana for treatment of burns over much of their bodies.

Chet Newsome, a truck driver who lives nearby, said Sunday he was awakened about 5:30 a.m. Saturday by the fire and a woman "in hysterics" outside the garage who was screaming there were two men trapped inside the garage.

Newsome said he grabbed an ax and was chopping a hole through one of the garage doors to gain entrance when he saw one of the men escape from a side door with severe burns on his face and arms.

Newsome said he was able to break through the door, but could only see black smoke at first.

"It was dark, I was afraid to go inside, but then I saw the other man's leg. It was burned so I grabbed his belt and pulled him out."

Newsome said firefighters, called by his girlfriend, arrived just as the garage was engulfed in flames.

Scott said firefighters extinguished the blaze in 13 minutes with no further injuries.

Columbus East reopens as flood repairs continue

August 12, 2008

COLUMBUS, Ind. — Work continues on repairing the damage caused two months ago when floodwaters swamped Columbus East High School even as students return to class this week.

Officials estimate the high school sustained \$2.8 million in damage from the June 7 flooding that hit much of central and southern [Indiana](#). Floodwater damaged the main gym and an auxiliary gym, along with some offices and classrooms.

Students are scheduled to return to school Thursday, and [Principal](#) Mark Newell said he hoped students would be patient while repairs are completed.

"There were 42 inches in the gymnasiums here and, yes, we did have carp that were swimming through from gymnasium to gymnasium," he said.

Workers have been installing a new gym floor, removing a basketball court and tennis court, replacing wallboard, painting and cleaning.

Newell said he expected the gym to reopen by mid-October.

The school's TV studio was also destroyed by the flooding, said television instructor Don Baker.

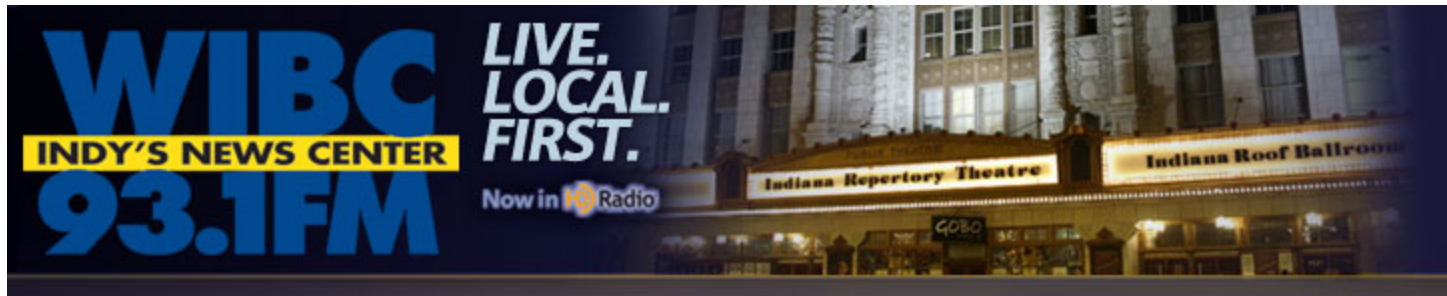
"It just brought tears to my eyes almost, coming in here and having water almost to your waist," Baker said.

Southside Elementary School and the school district's administration building were also damaged, with the elementary school needing a new gym floor and repairs to five classrooms.

The June flooding hit hundreds of [homes](#) in the city about 40 miles south of Indianapolis. The storm also caused \$110 million in damage to Columbus Regional Hospital and more than \$100 million in damage to a Cummins Inc. research and development center.

Columbus East had about 1,500 students last school year, but Newell said he was unsure how much enrollment would change since the flooding displaced many families.

"We are waiting to see who shows up to register," he said.



Federal Aid for Flood Damage Expected to Hit \$400M

State salutes hundreds of employees who lent a hand

By Eric Berman

8/11/2008

Indiana is likely to collect at least \$400 million in federal aid to help rebuild from the June floods.

Homeowners have received about \$50 million in flood assistance. The Small Business Administration has handed out about that amount to businesses. And homeland security director Joe Wainscott expects about \$300 million for local governments.

About 400 of the estimated 3,000 state workers and National Guard troops who helped out after the disaster received an in-person thank-you from Wainscott and Governor Daniels. Homeland security workers already got a thank-you from Daniels at an Indianapolis conference last month.



FEMA signup ends for June flooding

Vigo had highest number of applicants in Indiana

By Arthur E. Foulkes

The Tribune-Star

TERRE HAUTE — Eight weeks ago, Wabash Valley flood victims were camped out at the Booker T. Washington Community Center in Terre Haute, waiting for flood relief. Now, most disaster relief operations at the community center have shut down and only a few federal officials remain.

Monday was the last day to apply for disaster assistance related to the June 7 flooding.

Since the flooding, 3,219 Vigo County residents registered for federal disaster relief, according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Disaster grants approved for Vigo County residents totaled more than \$17 million, according to FEMA.

Vigo County had more applications for assistance than any other county in Indiana, said Mel Jenkins, a FEMA spokesman. Marion County, with 2,869 applicants, had the second-highest total. Morgan County, with 2,603 applicants, had the third most applicants, according to figures released by FEMA.

Statewide, more than 17,000 Hoosiers in 40 counties applied for disaster relief, FEMA reports.

Although the opportunity to register for disaster relief has passed, information about previously registered cases is still available by calling 1-800-621-FEMA (3362), Jenkins said.

"Even as we are moving our various FEMA response teams to other duties and assignments ... the commitment to [Hoosiers] hit by the storms is ongoing," Jenkins said. "FEMA will stay strongly involved with individuals, local governments and the state of Indiana," he said.

The maximum grant awarded by FEMA for residential disaster assistance is \$28,800, Jenkins said. In Vigo County, 36 maximum grants were awarded, he said.

Statewide, federal officials approved more than \$140 million in disaster recovery grants and loans for Hoosiers. FEMA approved more than \$50 million in disaster recovery grants and the Small Business Administration approved more than \$53 million in low interest loans, according to figures released by FEMA.

FEMA's goal is to get disaster victims safe, secure and sanitary, Jenkins said. The agency is not mandated to restore individuals to their pre-disaster status, he said.

Disaster relief is a partnership between federal, state and community organizations, Jenkins said. "The partnership here was very good," he said.